(English version)

Question for written answer E-001931/24
to the Commission
André Rodrigues (S&D)
(3 October 2024)

Subject: Solidarity and funding to renovate the Divino Espírito Santo Hospital in the Azores

On 4 May 2024, a major fire broke out at the Divino Espírito Santo Hospital (DESH) in Ponta Delgada, São Miguel, Azores, putting it out of action. The entire hospital had to be evacuated, with patients being moved into alternative accommodation. The healthcare system and services on the island and in the wider region also had to be reorganised.

DESH is the largest health facility in the region and the hospital for the other health centres, giving it an important role on the island and in the region as a whole. The disaster has therefore considerably disrupted healthcare and has had a significant financial impact on the Azores region's health service and budget.

1. Has Portugal activated the EU Solidarity Fund to help cover the costs of this disaster and quickly restore the hospital? If so, how much funding has been requested?

2. What other EU funding is available to the region and Member State to quickly restore and improve a crucial health facility in one of the EU's outermost regions?

Submitted: 3.10.2024

Answer given by Ms Ferreira on behalf of the European Commission
(19 November 2024)

1. The EU Solidarity Fund (EUSF) ([1]) can be activated at the request of an affected Member State within 12 weeks of the first damage. The Member State must demonstrate that the total direct damage exceeds the thresholds specified in Article 2 Regulation (EC) No 2012/2002, that is, in the event of a 'regional disaster' in an outermost region, total direct damage exceeding 1% of regional gross domestic product. Portugal has not requested EUSF assistance for this disaster.

2. The 2021-2027 Cohesion Policy funds can help supporting healthcare infrastructure. For example, the regional programme for the Azores plans to allocate EUR 72.4 million from the European Regional Development Fund to the renovation or construction of new energy-efficient healthcare buildings, health equipment, and measures to improve the delivery of family and community-based care services.

([1]) Council Regulation (EC) No 2012/2002 of 11 November 2002 establishing the European Union Solidarity Fund (OJ L 311, 14.11.2002, p. 3) as amended by Regulation (EU) No 661/2014 of the European Parliament and the Council of 15 May 2014 (OJ L 189, 27.6.2014, p. 143) and by Regulation (EU) 2020/461 of the European Parliament and the Council of 30 March 2020 (OJ L 99, 31.3.2020, p. 9). https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:32002R2012